

Plains Farmer: the Diary of William G. Deloach, 1914-1964

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Plains Farmer: The Diary of William G. DeLoach, 1914-1964, edited by Janet M. Neugebauer. College Station: Texas A & M University Press, 1991. xxxii, 367 pp. Illustrations, map, notes, bibliography, index. \$39.50 cloth.

REVIEWED BY R. DOUGLAS HURT, IOWA STATE UNIVERSITY

Despite all that has been written about the agricultural history of the Great Plains, most of that work emphasizes the nineteenth century. The comparatively sparse agricultural and rural history of the twentieth century often centers on matters of governmental policy. Little historical work traces the daily life of residents over time and within the context of place. Rarer still are firsthand, contemporary accounts about life on the Great Plains. Yet diaries and autobiographical records can provide essential material for historical research, writing, and learning. Each can help the historian, the student, or the general reader gain a sense of immediacy, feeling, and understanding for the matter at hand. The diary of William G. DeLoach, who spent most of his life raising cotton in West Texas, ranks among the best of these sources. Janet M. Neugebauer, assistant archivist for the Southwest Collection at Texas Tech University, has masterfully edited DeLoach's fifty-year, multivolume diary.

In 1887 DeLoach moved by wagon with his parents from Georgia to Parker County, Texas. Eleven years later, at the age of eighteen, DeLoach made his way to the West Texas Plains and began working as a cowhand on the Two-Buckle Ranch in Crosby County. With only a few exceptions, he lived on the Llano Estacado or Staked Plains for the remainder of his life. On March 28, 1914, at the age of thirty-four, DeLoach made the first entry in his diary. He devotedly wrote in his diary nearly every day for the next fifty years. From his entries we can learn much about the agricultural history of the Great Plains.

DeLoach's entries are particularly good for prices and problems concerning the production of cotton and grain sorghum as well as other commodities, such as eggs, hogs, and melons. As a historian who has used the original diaries, I found his notations about weather conditions and soil erosion extremely helpful for understanding life in the Dust Bowl. His reflections on government policy provide grass-roots evidence of the conservatism that made many farmers like him reluctant to participate in government agricultural programs that began with the New Deal. His diaries also show the essential flexibility and mobility of farmers on the Great Plains. Overall, his diaries provide the grist for agricultural and rural historians to use time and again for their writings about the Great Plains.

Neugebauer has provided an excellent introduction and useful annotations that explain economic problems, trace government policy, and clarify family relationships. Her selections make this abbreviated, published version of the diaries useful for both students and scholars. Primarily, her selections concern matters of agriculture, but she has included some entries that social historians will find valuable. My only criticism is that she corrected DeLoach's grammar, punctuation, and spelling. As a result, she has sanitized his writing. Although the general reader may appreciate this editorial technique, the diary has lost some of its charm and genuineness. As a result, scholars who want to quote from the dairies should consult the original ledgers, but they can use the factual information published here with confidence.

Although DeLoach never left the southern Great Plains to farm anywhere else, Iowans can profit from reading his diary because it provides a general understanding of the problems small-scale farmers faced during much of the twentieth century. It also will prove suggestive for similar projects. With luck, someone will discover and publish the twentieth-century diaries of Iowa farm men and women. Sources such as these are invaluable for understanding the past.

A Hero Perished: The Diary and Selected Letters of Nile Kinnick, edited by Paul Baender. Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1991. xliii, 292 pp. Illustrations, notes. \$27.95 cloth.

REVIEWED BY DAVID L. PORTER, WILLIAM PENN COLLEGE

A Hero Perished contains the letters and diary of Nile Clarke Kinnick, the most legendary University of Iowa football player. His 1939 grid-iron feats made him a national celebrity and earned him the Heisman, Maxwell, and Camp trophies as college player of the year.

Editor Paul Baender adeptly reviews Kinnick's career in the introduction, showing how the heroic American innocent moved from activist to legend to myth. Kinnick grew up in rural Adel, Iowa, the grandson of Iowa governor G. W. Clarke, and the son of Nile C. Kinnick, a farmer, and Frances (Clarke) Kinnick, a devout Christian Scientist. The Kinnicks disciplined Nile to strive for a measure of greatness and taught him the values of work, organization, advancement, and self-control. After excelling in high-school athletics, young Kinnick enrolled at the University of Iowa in 1936 and won All-Big Ten Conference football honors in 1937. He experienced an injury-plagued 1938 season, but achieved legendary status in 1939. Kinnick graduated Phi Beta Kappa from Iowa with an economics degree in 1940 and bypassed professional football to enter the University of

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